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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GR
SUBJECT: CONTROVERSY OVER THE COMMUTATION OF THE DEATH SENTENCES CONTINUES

REF: ATHENS 6490

1. THE OPPOSITION CONTINUES TO HAMMER AWAY AT THE CONTROVERSIAL DECISION BY THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT TO COMMUTE THE DEATH PENALTIES IMPOSED ON FORMER JUNTA LEADERS PAPADOPOULOS, PATTAKOS AND MAKAREZOS. ON THE OTHER HAND THE GOG HOLDS TO THE POSITION IT ACTED CORRECTLY. MEANWHILE THE THREE DEFENDANTS CONCERNED, IN VIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EXPRESSED INTENTION TO INITIATE THE NECESSARY ACTION TO COMMUTE THE DEATH SENTENCES, HAVE DECIDED TO PURSUE THE SAME LINE THEY ADOPTED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TRIAL, I.E., REFUSING TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE COMPETENCE OF THE COURT TO TRY THEM. THUS, THEY HAVE INDICATED THEY WILL NOT APPEAL TO THE SUPREME COURT. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHAT THE OTHER DEFENDANTS PLAN TO DO IN THIS RESPECT.

2. THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP OF THE CENTER UNION/NEW FORCES (CU/NF) MET YESTERDAY (AUGUST 26) AND UNANIMOUSLY ENDORSED THE STAND OF ITS PRESIDENT, GEORGE
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MAVROS, IN CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS ACTION

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AND CALLING FOR THE CONVENING OF A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENT TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE. FOLLOWING THE MEETING, THE CU/NF ISSUED A STATEMENT IN WHICH IT SAID THAT THE GOG'S EXPLANATIONS NOT ONLY DID NOT ASSUAGE, BUT, TO THE CONTRARY, INCREASED PUBLIC CONCERN. FURTHER-MORE, THE PARTY CHARGED, THE GOVERNMENT EXPLANATIONS WERE AN INSULT TO THE ARMED FORCES AND CONSTITUTED A CONTRADICTION OF THE DEFENSE MINISTER'S ASSURANCES THAT THE ARMED FORCES HAD BEEN CLEANSED OF REACTIONARY ELEMENTS. FINALLY, THE STATEMENT CONCLUDED THAT IF THE PRIME MINISTER WANTED CALM, HE SHOULD DISMISS THOSE "INSULTERS" (CLEARLY ALLUDING TO JUSTICE MINISTER STEFANAKIS AND UNDER SECRETARY FOR PRESS AND INFORMATION LAMBRIAS - REFTEL) WITH WHOM A POLITICAL DIALOGUE WAS NOT POSSIBLE, EITHER INSIDE OR OUTISDE THE PARLIAMENT.

3. ANDREAS PAPANDREOU, ARRIVING AT ATHENS AIRPORT FROM RHODES YESTERDAY, CONTINUED HIS ASSAULT ON THE GOVERNMENT. IN AN INTERVIEW, HE REPEATED THAT THE PEOPLE WOULD NOT ACCEPT THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION AND SAID THAT IN ORDER TO RECTIFY THE SITUATION THE GOVERNMENT HAD ONLY TWO OPTIONS: (A) TO DISSOLVE THE PARLIAMENT AND HOLD NEW ELECTIONS; OR (B) TO RESPECT THE DECISION OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM.

4. REPLYING TO PRESS QUERIES IN THESSALONIKI YESTERDAY (HE IS THERE TO OBSERVE THE FINAL PHASE OF THE "PTOLEMOS" NATIONAL DEFENSE EXERCISE), DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF CHARACTERIZED THE OPPOSTION'S ATTACK AS "A TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT". HE SAID THAT THE MILITARY SHOULD BE LEFT OUTSIDE OF THE DISCUSSION ON THE ISSUE. THE ARMED FORCES, HE CONTENDED, HAVE BEEN ENGAGED ONLY WITH IMPROVING THE NATIONAL DEFENSE, NOTHING MORE. OTHER GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN HAVE POINTED OUT THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MODERATING THE SENTENCES IS THE GOVERNMENT'S NOT THE PARLIAMENT'S AND THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT INTEND TO CALL A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENT.

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5. IN THE POPULAR MIND, THERE SEEMS TO BE SKEPTICISM AT THE GOVERNMENT'S DEFENSE OF ITS ACTION. HOWEVER, INDIVIDUAL NEWSPAPERS ARE ADOPTING THE EXPECTED LINE CONSISTENT WITH THE RESPECTIVE VIEWPOINT EACH SUPPORTS. THE COMMUNIST NEWSPAPERS, AVGHI AND RIZOSPASTIS, ARE HIGHLY CRITICAL, AS, TO A LESSER EXTENT, IS CU/NF BACKER TO VIMA. ON THE OTHER HAND, PRO-GOVERNMENT PAPERS ACROPOLIS AND VRADYNI DEFEND

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THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION. RIGHT WING
ELEFTHEROS COSMOS TAKES OUT AFTER PAPANDREOU FOR
SCREAMING FOR THE BLOOD OF THE JUNTA MEMBERS WHEN HE,
HIMSELF, WAS OUT OF THE COUNTRY DURING MOST OF THE
PERIOD THEY WERE IN POWER AND CHARGED HE HAD EVEN STOOPED TO
BARGAINING WITH THE JUNTA IN ORDER TO BE ALLOWED TO
LEAVE GREECE.
KUBISCH

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